

364 sections and especially around the market. Now formal regulations require the inhabitants [232] to dig latrine ditches in the compounds, but it will be a long time before the native loses the habit of relieving himself in the open air.

Chapter 15

Mossi Dances and their Significance (1)

1. An excerpt, revised and completed, from a lecture delivered by the author on December 24, 1926.

535 In this chapter, we shall describe the Mossi dances, explain their meaning, and tell of the old beliefs with which they are connected.

Indeed, these dances occupy a place apart in the general category of dances of indigenous peoples.

The latter, for the most part and notably among the Boussancé and the Gourma [Gurma], are only exuberant displays, sometimes exercises in suppleness, sometimes caricatures of the motions of love.

The Mossi dances, on the other hand, are actually performed in accordance with fixed rules. There are three types: 1) dances which we shall call sentimental, known as wennega; 2) dances that are part war dance and part religious, called waongo; and finally 3) funeral dances known as warba.

535 In order of precedence, let us begin with the love dance
533 called wennega. This is executed at gatherings. The lover and
832 his sweetheart -- the latter dressed in black, the ceremonial
color -- are receiving their friends. Beer is flowing, and mouths
are filled with kola nuts. Soon the musicians strike up [234] their
[534] rustic guitars (kondé) which are accompanied by the beating of
gourds. The women sing:

539 M' Ba sida talem néré

533 Talem kan-kafn, talem ti

Pagh ka zafid koulogh wa mandé

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"My husband, keep me well,
Keep me in proper fashion,
A woman ages as quickly as gombo [okra]."

In Mossi country, indeed, married women are "kept women."
Other wennega songs include the following:

Kandin bilin koamba ziyob'
Ade kandin bilin koamb' ziyob ya
La Fer-nan dambin yide
Bamb' data pagha piligh' wa rebre y a
Ti prote-mannaie yaoulin pa yaguedin
Koure yanga-yanga karin kouma
f' san katarin kont'me y é
f' san katarin kont'me bif ramodeguema

"Those who work in the circle (subdivision of the circle) (1)

1. In the old days Ouagadougou was
both the headquarters for the Mossi
circle and a subdivision of the circle.

do not know how to chase women. Those in the big circle, the company of the Fernands, are even more ignorant of the art of pleasing. They all want to take off the womens' skirts as though they were unrolling a mat, but they keep their pocketbooks hermetically closed. Wearers of trousers in whose folds hide [235] lice, if you have nothing to give me, at least do not try to take me by force."

F' Nian néré yetta pa nan
logh là
Fola biga ma bé ba
f' ka yi wenin nana y è

"You admire this girl,
Her beauty has won you

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And you do not want to let her go!
Are you perchance this child's mother or father?
You are not the God who created her."

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832 The wennega consists mostly of back-and-forth movements of the hips in slow rhythm. Various figures are performed, but there is always the same rhythm and the same swaying of the hips. The sweetheart herself begins to dance, a curious fact, since women do not usually take part in the men's dances.

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776 We have noted that another form of Mossi dance is religious, the waongo. The waongo is a mysterious being, half animal, half spirit.

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776 Origin of the waongo. Tradition has it that this being was one day found all alone on a plain. Those who first saw him took fright and ran away. They went to tell the village elders, who assembled a goodly number of young men, armed [236] with arrows and sticks, to overcome this strange being.

He was not found at the place where he had first been seen. He had moved some distance away. The villagers surrounded him, and the elders, who had brought him a rooster, began to question him: "If he should be taken to the village, would he hurt the villagers? Would he bring misfortune?" The chicken was then sacrificed, but it is told that the sacrifice was not accepted.

The elders returned to the village and brought back a white rooster (norapelga), a he-goat (boéga), and a dog (bâga). Then they addressed the waongo, saying: "We were perhaps mistaken just now. Perhaps you wanted an animal in addition to the rooster we offered to you? If, by becoming our guest, you can bring us happiness, good health, and children, accept these offerings!" They slaughtered the rooster and the goat and killed the dog. This time the sacrifices were accepted.

[532]

What the waongo is. The waongo consists of a mask, usually representing the head of an animal, and a bindou (a kind of long cloak made from the bark of the béringa shrub which is soaked in water for a long time to blacken it or from baobab fibers).

535 or there will be falls which are inevitable when one of the girls is too robust.

535 Here, chosen at random, is one of the kiguibto songs:
539

M'Ma ho, ka M'Ma warla y e
Lebin wa regh 'big' tim boudguin
n'di Mossa yarbate ribo

"Mother, oh, my mother,
Come quickly and take my child,
For I am going to the next village
To consume pitilessly the goods of
these wretched Mossé." (1)

1. Mossi.

[241]

Chapter 16

Agriculture

241 Selection of land to be tilled. As he is wont to do in all im-
787 portant matters, the Moaga entrusts to a soothsayer the responsibility of choosing the land to be cultivated. In actual fact, he chooses it himself, but the diviner must tell him whether or not it is haunted by spirits and what sacrifices are advisable to protect him from evil spirits.

The soothsayer always warns him of the presence of spirits (kinkirsi) and prescribes the necessary sacrifices and alms.

241 Sacrifices. The new occupant calls for the head of the family
782 or, if he is a Nionioga, for the Tengsoba, who is in charge of sacrifices. The following sacramental words are pronounced:
"A zaguel tib reg' noag'la zom kom kon Naba zidwende, tib kon zig'tinguin damba, tib kon timpelem, tib kon yaramba, kon saramba, tib reg'kon zig, kinkirga ta wa me nan baou ki, on -- on tib reg'koin gnimasse, lass' pogh'bang, lasse zoug'bang, naore bang ... " Translation? "On the part of X, I offer this rooster and this water with flour to the sun god (Zidwendé), to the

622 only a relative of the deceased or of a previously deceased naba. Once they have come to an agreement, the naba sets a date and notifies the candidates. Each of them, full of hope, comes toward evening with his men. He is dressed in trousers, a skin worn diagonally across the chest and back, and a blanket thrown over the shoulder in the classic way, leaving the right shoulder and the right arm free. Before each of them stands a young girl, holding a staff which may become a scepter a few moments later. This girl is supposed to receive power at the same time as the chosen candidate, and throughout the investiture ceremonies she will care for the objects used by the new naba and everyone will give her cowries. She will return home after the ceremonies.

All the candidates having arrived, they are seated in the outer courtyard. The naba remains in his hut, and the minister goes to him. The naba names the man of his choice, and the minister goes out, grabs the man's blanket, and tells him that he has been chosen by the naba. The defeated candidates leave hastily, while their men carry the chosen man on their shoulders, which serve for the shield of old, and sing his praises, calling him wobro, "elephant." The Trabrana /sic/, bravest of the brave, then comes to him with a leather satchel, and the chosen man must give him cowries. He also gives some to the minister to get back his blanket, and throughout the three festive days that follow his appointment he must provide large quantities of millet beer. These expenses are alleviated by his new subjects, who come to greet him and offer him gifts as soon as they get the news. /20/ The defeated candidates return on the following day, with shaved heads, to make obeisance to their fortunate competitor. For three days there is much merry-making at the household of the minister who acted as intermediary. Drums are played, the people dance, and they sing as follows:

622 Sen kong'nam, lébra sonkam ysa.

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Bamb'naba y minimini biga, ka zue.
waodo, dem kom.

Those who were not chosen
will gather peanuts.

Their naba is like the young
of the wild duck: he does
not fear the cold, he plays
in the water.

Sérénde wobro, n'béla.

Come to the elephant and
greet him.

622 Sen damma nyébra, baryoro nan wa.
539

If someone attempts to kill
the crocodile, the serpent
appears immediately. (1)

1. That is, to say, if someone threatens the new naba, the province chief will come to his aid.

622 On the third day the new naba is shaved. His sister, or in her
absence an old woman, begins the procedure, but anyone may com-
plete it. Everybody then goes to the naba: the chosen man is to re-
ceive a name, and from now on it will be forbidden to call him by
[55] his previous name. Each naba receives three names, or rather three
mottoes, chosen by his sister or by an old woman of the family.
These mottoes allude to a historical event or to the chosen man's
position. When everyone has arrived at the naba's house, the man's
sister discloses the mottoes to the naba, who proclaims them, and
the drums in turn repeat them to the people. Then the dancing,
singing, and drinking are resumed. On the following day the new
naba, duly invested, returns to his village to take up his duties.

Here are some of the mottoes:

622 I. The mottoes of the naba of Koupéla allude to the war which
539 took place at the time of his father's appointment between the latter,
Naba Ibri, and the people of Kazem'bouanga:

1. Wadra yerda né kyougou. Wadra gousa menga, t'a péleum
ka yd kyougou. The star glows in spite of the moon. But it should
beware, for its brilliance does not obliterate that of the moon. (The
star stands for the Kazem'bouanga pretender. The moon is the naba
of Koupéla.)

2. Kalébdou kanenga, la son boulwaka. Kalebodou sauce is not
good, but it is better than boulwaka sauce. (The naba of Koupéla is
not very powerful, but he is more powerful than the people of
Kazem'bouanga.)

3. Néda gwanga nan samma. The lame man claims that he
will kill him. (The pretender, the lame man, intends to kill the
naba of Koupéla.)

II. The mottoes of the Saman'Naba, prime minister of Koupéla,
allude to his position vis-à-vis the naba, to whom he owes everything
and who supports him:

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1. Ti'douda béleum villi n'pam n'dou. Those who wish to climb a tree seize the branches for support. /21/

2. Gigemdé sen touka séolro, wenniginamma, walpélronamma, nonga morbo, la'b zuéta gemdé. The lion digs up the salty earth (good to eat); the buffalo and koba /a kind of horse antelope/ like to eat it, but fear the lion. (The enemies of the Saman'Naba would like to take his place, but fear the naba.)

3. Kong'panga, bar'bala. Those who lack strength remain servants.

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The appointment of the high ministers involves only a few gifts, offered during the festive days which last from the death of the minister to the nomination of his successor. The eldest son usually inherits the position, but the province chief may designate anyone he pleases.

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Upon the death of the naba of Koupéla, a province chief, the ministers hold a council and decide among themselves who is to be his successor. The eldest son is nearly always chosen. Before the name of the man selected is announced, the head of the village section that bears the name Koupéla notifies the canton chiefs, who gather in the village of Koupéla. When everyone has arrived, the Tabrana /sic/ proclaims the name of the man chosen, and they all proceed to Bélousa to disclose their choice to the naba and to request his investiture. The naba of Bélousa usually accepts the man thus formally designated. If there is disagreement, or if he himself would prefer a different choice, he notifies the Moro Naba accordingly and indicates his own preferences; when his messenger returns, he proclaims the appointment, and everyone submits to his will. After all, he "has the strength." As badges of investiture, the naba of Bélousa presents the chosen man with a cap, a pair of shoes, and a scepter. The new naba still may not wear the cap, put on the shoes, or hold the scepter. He must proceed first to the grave of the ancestor of the people, Naba Kourita, where he offers sacrifices, especially that of a cow. The festivities last for seven days, in the course of which millet beer flows freely and cattle is slaughtered in large numbers. In the course of these festivities the head of the chosen man is shaved, and he receives from the messengers of the naba of Bélousa the cap, shoes, and scepter; only then does he truly become a naba, with the right to

[769]

782 a hut for one's wife. Sacrifices are made for every purpose, for everybody, and practically to everything.

Sacrifices are made everywhere. The sacred grove is the place most frequently chosen, along with the dwelling-stone of the kikiriga who protects the house. Sacrifices may be made, however, in the fields, in open spaces where nothing grows, or on the path which leads to the tangandé either from the village where one lives or from one's village of origin, if it is learned that the spirit requires a sacrifice and one cannot go there in person.

[92] Any man may offer a sacrifice once he has reached the age of reason, and children of about ten are sometimes seen offering their sacrifices with as much solemnity as their elders. Women cannot themselves make sacrifices; they must resort to the agency of men. They may, however, furnish the victim and partake of it when it is eaten. Nabas and men of some wealth have their own appointed sacrificer or sacrificers. This is compulsory for province chiefs, who themselves never sacrifice in public ceremonies and quite rarely in private.

There are several kinds of sacrifices, and we shall study each one of them in turn, the better to understand how the Mossi communicate with the invisible world.

First, the characteristic sacrifice which serves as basis to all the others, the mand'zallé.

The sacrificer, accompanied by his son bearing a white or otherwise colored rooster and a gourd containing millet flour mixed with water, proceeds to the place of the sacrifice, for example, to the tangandé.

Upon arriving he says:

782 Kabré, kabré.

Excuse me, pardon me.

539 /91/ Then he sits down, his face turned to the west, and taking the victim in his hands, he says:

Na-Wend'daogo, sak'a tan!

God-king male, answer thrice!

Na-Wend'poko, sak'a nasé!

God-king female, answer four times!

Na-Wend'ka kou ned'yé, kon ky yé.

If God-king does not kill, we do not die.

Na-Wendé ka léo, ned'kon

If God-king does not bind, we are

lu'yé. — Pilimpik'dim

not bound. — The butterflies

n'yélé; lila kom'dim

have told us; the spirits of the

n'yélé t'eb y noara, ti

water have told us to take a

782
539 no'pelra t'eb kis'tangandé
r'a déé n'di né teng'kikirsi
lé teng'portapa.

bird, a white rooster, and to offer it to the tangandé, so that he may take it and it with the kikirsi of the village and their wives.

782 This formula may vary with the circumstances. This is when the
539 sacrificer sets forth his wishes. He tells the tangandé, for instance,
755 that his son is ill and that he has consulted the sorcerer, who has told him to take a white rooster and offer it to the tangandé with water, so that the tangandé may restore his son's health. Then he pours the water behind his back, toward the east, and says:

Na-wendé, déé a ybou kom!

God-king, receive the water of your rising!

Then he pours water before him, to the west, and says:

Na-wendé, déé a kyenbo kom!

God-king, receive the water of your setting!

Finally he pours water on the sacrificial stone or before his feet, saying:

Tangandé, yk'n'dée kom
nyou la kwen la biga lafi!

Tangandé, arise, receive the water and drink it, and grant health to my son!

Nyé lé zouanga, nini ka yé.

He is like a blind man, he no longer has eyes.

Tangandé nyé youngo né
wintoro la ko biga lafi.

The tangandé, he sees night and day and grants health to my child,

If the sacrifice includes an offering of millet beer, he pours some on the sacrificial stone, saying:

Na-Wendé ka nyou dam yé, la
porédimma nyouda.

God-king does not drink beer, but those of his retinue do.

Then he seizes the rooster with his left hand, bends its head back by pulling the comb, and slits its throat. He allows the blood to flow upon the stone where the water was poured, while saying:

Tangandé déé noara n'di, la
kwen la biga lafi né sounoro!

Tangandé, receive this rooster and eat it, and grant my child health and joy!

Then he tosses the rooster before him, saying:

Noara bé Wenname, ba souk'
ba'a.

This rooster is for God; may He dispell the illness.

Then he sends his child to get the rooster. The boy grasps the bird when it is lying on its back and if necessary helps it to achieve this

782 position. /92/ He drags it along the ground by the feet to the
 539 sacrificer, who says:

755 T'a vouda bemdaoge.

Drag me enemies along the ground.

The sacrificer then seizes the chicken and sets it upon its feet, holding its head straight:

T'a timma biga!

May He grant health to my child!

He turns the rooster around, with its head down and its legs up in the air:

T'a terida bema!

May He cause my enemies to bite the dust!

With his left hand he tears feathers from the neck, spits on them, and glues them to the stone or to the ground with the victims's blood, saying:

Yelbandé tou sébro!

May all that is evil go with the wind!

Ta toubré oum!

May his /my enemy's/ ears catch (my curses)!

Ta nif ka nya yé!

May he /my enemy's/ eyes go blind!

He breaks one of the chicken's legs:

T'a kao bemdaogo karga!

Break the leg of my male enemies!

He breaks the other leg:

T'a kao bempoko karga!

Break the leg of my female enemies!

He returns the bird to the child, who carries it away. The remaining water and beer are poured on the very spot of the sacrifice.

The rooster is plucked there or at home and roasted or cooked in water according to the sacrifice. The sacrificer removes the claws, beak, pinions, and liver, and he places them in the left hand of his child who lays them by the path some distance away, saying:

Mand'déé gotra, la kwen
 déto go nyé masem.

The sacrifice is received with the left hand, but grant him health with the right hand.

He returns to the place where the people are gathered, and the victim is shared among all present. When all have eaten, they gather in a group before the sacrificer and greet him as follows:

Wennam déé mando!

May God receive /Tr., the Mossi word means "eat"/ your sacrifice!

Wennam tou taoté!

May God accept it!

The sacrifice is over.

181 who speak little; there are the choleric people, more liable than others
157 to anger, more spiteful, but also endowed with more energy.

181 Energy is not the chief quality of these people, who are trained by
156 their leaders to blind and faithful obedience. The tight organization
we have described has its unhappy consequences, atrophy of the will
and destruction of the spirit of initiative. Such is the price. A Mossi
cannot resist those who are more powerful. Flexible and almost
cowardly before his superiors, he makes up for it with his inferiors
and shows great arrogance and disdain toward those who are weaker.

181 /110/ The Mossi do not exercise their will, and they do not exer-
153 cise their thinking faculty. This is not because they lack intelligence,
but because they are not accustomed to thought except when their
interests are at stake, at which time some of them demonstrate true
intelligence and diplomacy.

The Mossi do not question the why of things. While small children
in our country like to argue and often perplex us with their questions,
the Mossi never ask themselves, "How can this be? Why is it so and
not otherwise?" The first answer that comes to mind satisfies them.

This lack of thought is the cause of their lagging civilization, for
is it not true that we move forward unceasingly only because we seek
to investigate the cause of everything? It also results in a paucity of
ideas. Conversations turn mainly upon women, food, and agriculture
during the rainy season. Their sphere of ideas is quite restricted, but
it is capable of expansion, for the Mossi may be considered quite
intelligent.

539 If proverbs express the wisdom of a people, the Mossi certainly do
not lack wisdom and often couch it with great subtlety. Permit us to
prove this by quoting a few proverbs, culled in the course of conver-
sations by Fr. Thueux, who kindly conveyed them to us and who
gathered explanations, since some of them are real enigmas to our
European minds.

1. Kota ningri, ka kot' sen kong'ye.

Give above you, not below.

(If you give to someone who is more powerful, you
will always get something out of it.)

2. Maokasankaré ñarda kon lo'é naobi taoré.

No matter how much it may hurry, the heel never
catches up with the toes.

(Who is the hen to sing before the rooster?)

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3. Pang'sen tu soré, būm buta mo'en.
When Strength walks the path, Justice steps aside
into the bush.
(Might makes right.)
4. Ka suet'nil ba'a, nan nōka.
The dog will grab you if you don't respect its nose.
(Don't laugh, for you might pay for it.)
5. Soam' garedga, wamma n' so.
The master of the hunt is master of the disputed hare.
(Every disputed hare devolves to the master of the hunt.)
6. M'ba di sarabo, n' long'zom.
My father ate the millet mush, he is moving toward
the flour.
(He who has drunk will drink /The rich get richer./.)
7. Fo nan ka suk'korgo, l'e kurn sa'a.
You have not yet searched the bag, and you weep
about the lightning.
(You cry before you are hit.)
8. Dunna benda, saon beo' kurga.
A breechcloth today is better than trousers tomorrow.
(One thing that is yours, it is said, is worth more than
two things you may have in the future /A bird in
hand is better than two in the bush./.)
9. Kobré sen kyama, ya kob' kaodga.
A hard bone is a brittle bone.
(Your strength will ultimately betray your courage.)
- /111/ 10. Sarab' ki n' beng' a menga.
Mush that spoils turns to water by itself.
(He has done harm to himself.)
11. Yind' kondro, ka bé sokr'ye.
Old songs are not questioned.
(No explanation is needed for familiar things.)
12. Abra kud' ka leb n' tut' bé ias' yé.
An old leopard would not go back there.
(One does not return to a person one has wronged.)
13. Katré yi no'o, ka ginn' yé.
When the hyena was good, one does not turn aside.
(One returns to those places where he was welcomed.)
14. F' sen ka nong' néda, a kurga ya yobro.
If you don't like a man, his trousers are a bag.
(An enemy does everything badly.)

537

15. Sosra sen kaosda, wata ne korg' wenbsego.
When a conversation lingers, the bag is fingered.
(Familiarity breeds contempt.)
16. Pu' pidya, bango luéya.
Full belly, gagged indiscretion.
(Those who need you are discreet.)
17. Sad' no' o, yid noa' karga.
A good laugh is better than a chicken leg.
(A warm reception is better than a good meal.)
18. Ned' kon wok' a bâka, ti pemsom yi ye.
You don't cut open your shoulder just for the air to
come out.
(Never abandon a friend in need.)
19. Bunbundi ka dod' zalof'n yé.
Those who give their best do not go away empty-
handed.
(Work hard; do your best, there is no lack of true
wealth.)

18/ 153 The Mossi likes to talk. Although he has few ideas of his own, if one knows how to make use of his familiar experiences to bring him to a higher level, he follows the reasoning easily, understands quite promptly what is told him, and grasps the train of ideas and even the finer gradations of meaning. In short, he has quite a noteworthy aptitude for assimilation. Often I explained to a chief in broad outline the handling of a gun or the mechanism of a watch or bicycle. If an outsider came by, the naba relayed the explanations to show that he was intelligent and that he had grasped them properly. Indeed, I was often surprised at how well most of them did this.

They like pictures. At first they often hold them upside down, but a few explanations are usually sufficient to make them grasp their meaning. First they recognize familiar things, such as people, horses, dogs, and trees, and they explain them to each other. They come to understand the scene and the reasons for the attitudes of the figures pictured.

18/ 522 576 /112/ In conversations, when they are not ill at ease, they are lively, merry, and they like to laugh. It is a compliment on their part when they say that someone laughs easily. They are sometimes humorous, they understand innuendoes, but they know how to keep their distance and do not permit themselves any familiarities, even in words, toward their superiors.

- 181 They are very susceptible to teaching. The little slaves raised in
153 Malta learned the French language well, and all those who have met
them say that they are quite intelligent. We had children in our
school who quickly learned writing, reading, and arithmetic, and who
did not forget what they had learned when they got married and had
to leave school to work in the fields. Reading remains a pastime to
them, and they keep up their knowledge of the French language. We
did not notice among them what has so often been pointed out about
the little Arabs, who give great promise when young, signs of real
intelligence, and who do not live up to this promise when they grow
up. The intelligence of the Mossi develops with the years, and this
would make it possible to exercise considerable influence over them.
- 766 Teaching that opens their minds, however, should not cause them to
lose their religious sense without contributing anything in its place.
Within a short period of time this would bring about the demoralization
and downfall of this people who seem capable of rapid progress, and
it would be a pity.

- 538 They like to tell fables, and a volume of Mossi literature could
easily be compiled by gathering the historical legends, proverbs, and
fables which are to be found among this people. As an example, we
shall now recount a few stories we have been told. As in all primitive
tales, animals play the role of intelligent actors. The Romaunt of
the Rose has long since familiarized us with this kind of literature.

The Bad Vulture and the White Hawk

- 539 A bald vulture was wandering about the bush. A white hawk came
by and said to the vulture, "Why have you nothing to eat?" The
vulture replied, "It is true, I have nothing to eat. May God help me
find something." The hawk said, "God cannot give people enough
food to satisfy their hunger." The vulture answered, "If God does
not give me something to eat, I shall not eat."

The white hawk saw a dove alighting on a stick. The hawk
swooped down upon her, but the stick pierced his breast and came out
behind his head. The vulture came and ate the hawk.

The Monkey and the Turtle

539 The monkey told the turtle to come with him on his walk through the bush. They saw karite fruits, and the monkey climbed into the tree, shook it, and all the fruit fell down. The turtle told him, "Monkey, this fruit is green." The monkey abused the turtle because she had called him by his name, and he feared the dog. Finally the turtle called the monkey, who came down and told her to fetch some fire in order to roast some meat. The turtle /113/ went to get the fire and found a dog lying near the hearth. The dog asked the turtle, "Who sent you to get fire?" The turtle replied, "The monkey sent me to look for fire." The dog told her, "Is this really true?" The turtle said, "It is true." Then the dog pretended to be dead. The turtle grabbed him by the tail, took some fire, and went back to the bush.

The monkey asked, "Is the dog dead, or is he alive?" The turtle said that he was dead. Then the monkey told her to bring the dog. The monkey seized the dog by the legs to lift him and took a stone to break his teeth. But the dog opened his eyes. Then the monkey said to the turtle, "Come and get hold of this chief's son, so I'll be able to get up." The turtle answered that she would not come. The monkey pushed the dog to make him fall, got up, and ran away. But the dog ran after him, caught him and killed him, and the turtle ran away and found a place to hide.

The Goat and the Hyena

A goat had gone to Dori to buy salt. The hyena met him along the way and felt like taking his salt. As soon as she saw him, she became panicky and started running. She found a lion who was lying down because he had a stomach-ache, and she told him that she knew a man who had a medicine for stomach-ache. The hyena went and fetched the goat. The goat came and greeted the lion, who said that he had a stomach-ache and that the hyena had told him that the goat knew a medicine. The goat answered, "Indeed I know a medicine, but it is made with hyena liver." The lion said to the hyena, "Take a piece of your flesh and give it to me." The hyena took a piece of her own flesh and gave it to the goat, who cooked it with salt and gave it to the lion. The lion asked him, "Should we add some more?"

539 The goat replied, "The hyena should give all of herself." The lion told the hyena to remove her own leg. The hyena bit herself. It hurt, and she ran away. The lion caught her and killed her. The goat ran away with his salt and went home.

This is why the hyena attacks livestock.

181 The Mossi are polite. This is the quality that first strikes all those
576 who have dealings with them. We mentioned earlier that the natives always greet one another. In fear of their nabas, the Mossi maintain before them a respectful, almost humiliating posture. They are very attentive to important outsiders and see to it that they should lack nothing a Mossi might wish: a sitting stool and mat are brought in immediately along with the drink; the food is abundant and usually clean and carefully prepared.

181 The Mossi are very hospitable and willingly give alms for its own
574 sake, that is, to poor people who cannot repay. They are generous and always share with their neighbors, and when they have millet beer, they hand it out liberally. No woman who is brewing beer would allow a stranger of some importance to go by without offering him a gourdful, and she is displeased if he refuses. An object once offered is never retrieved, and stratagems must be used to make a native take back under some pretext what he has given away.

576 /114/ The Mossi always offer things with the right hand. It is an insult to pass the gourd or to take it with the left hand. The oldest person in a group helps himself from a dish first, and all those present follow in order of seniority, down to the youngest. On the other
264 hand, the eldest stops eating first, and it is the youngest who eats the
27 last bits and cleans the gourd. When drinking, however, the most eminent person drinks the last drop.

576 Children do not greet their parents in the home, because it is their
574 home; but if a properly brought-up girl sees her mother coming with a full jar or a basket, she rushes to take the load from her, even if the woman is only a few yards from the soukala. When a friend has come to visit, it is considered good manners to carry her load for some distance when she leaves. In any case, visitors are always seen on their way, sometimes to the outskirts of the village.

576 The Mossi do not lack tact and sensibility. When they want something, they first delegate a friend with a gift, then send word that they have a small matter to discuss; sometimes they hint at what it may be and leave without waiting for an answer. Some time later

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VII

THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION

THE REVENUE for the support of the Mossi chiefs and their governmental system came from many sources in a variety of forms. The Mossi of Ouagadougou held that "the Mogho Naba is master of everything" (*Mogh Nab n so fa*), and when they referred to the control he and his chiefs exercised over their goods and services, they said, "The commoner rears his livestock for the chief," and cited the proverb "The snake gets whatever is in the belly of the frog." 652 [643] [539]

Since the Mossi were, and still are, primarily an agricultural people, the products of the soil were the main source of revenue. The Mossi chiefs did not own the land, but they controlled it and assigned land rights to their subjects. The Mossi believed that land had no value apart from people, and, conversely, that people could not exist without land. As they said, "Land is the mother; it fed the ancestors of this generation; it feeds the present generation and its children; and it provides the final resting place for all men." Therefore, a Mossi chief never hesitated to give anyone permission to use unoccupied land. It was in his interest to do so, because the more subjects he commanded, the greater were his revenue and prestige. An unpopular chief was censured not by a withholding of tribute and presents, but by a mass exodus of his subjects to another area. 651 423 [781] [427] [427] [626]

Through the administrative hierarchy, the common people contributed to the support of the various levels of government. The Mogho Naba periodically received agricultural produce from all his subjects. Through the village chiefs, the village people sent part of their produce to the district chiefs, who forwarded it to the provincial ministers. They, in turn, delivered it to the central government during a ceremony appropriately called "Soretasgho" ("completion of the road"). This event occurred at the end of the harvest festival, after all the crops had been gathered in. 643 651 796

To open the ceremony, the provincial governors' retainers began to clear the paths leading from the governors' compounds to the palace, for they had

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643 go, Sagha's eldest son, and Etienne Congo, Sagha's brother. Etienne Congo
666 allegedly had the support of some politicians, but he was rejected in favor
of Moussa. The new ruler was accepted by the Government Council as the
"supreme chief of the Mossi" and was installed in the traditional manner.
He indicated in his acceptance speech that he was "like a rock [kougri]
that nothing can move," and became known as Mogho Naba Kougri. A
few days after his installation, he appeared in full regalia before the mem-
bers of the Territorial Assembly to deliver what was probably the most
* 175 difficult inauguration speech ever composed by a Mogho Naba. This speech
643 will be quoted in full, because it may well be a eulogy for the Mossi chief:

● 539 Over and above the signs of respect shown to the mortal remains of my father,
and later the expressions of keen satisfaction on the people's part for the choice
of which I have been the object—over and above all this, I see the great inter-
est that the governmental and administrative authorities attach to the role
which my ancestors have always fulfilled, and which I am called upon to ful-
fill anew. Over and above all of these external manifestations, I see the un-
failing love of all the Mossi for the throne I occupy and for the tradition I
represent along with my confreres. Because the importance of my position,
as well as the honor that befalls me, surpasses the meager reality and the pos-
sibilities of one man, it is with conviction, sincerity, and faith that I present
myself to all of you to tell you that while I accept with fortitude these re-
sponsibilities and these honors for the love of my people, I count upon the
cooperation and friendship of all, the faithfulness, devotion, and courage of
all the Mossi, to acquit myself worthily and to preside not in a passive but in
an active and decisive way over the social and economic evolution of our
country.

Although I represent tradition and custom in this country; although I
must ensure the survival of venerable customs, concerning which we shall be
intransigent; I am aware, nevertheless, that there are customs which adapt
themselves with difficulty to the exigencies of the modern times in which we
live.

* 175 This is why, in addressing myself to all the customary chiefs, and espe-
643 cially to my closest associates, I shall say that we have no right to remain
631 passive observers of the reconstruction of our country and of the multiple
539 transformations of the society over whose destiny we have always presided.
We must move along with the tide, but in order not to be swept along at a
headlong pace and risk failure before reaching our goal, we must stand in
the vanguard of the race and lead it at a vigorous and satisfying pace, but
one which does not stifle the weak, for they too have a right to life, to pro-
gress, to well-being, and to our protection.

As recently, as ten years ago, it was easy to be a chief, just as it was easy
to be a cercle commander. It was enough to give orders for everything to run
smoothly. But today, the chief must add to his title a real merit, a knowledge
of men, a true devotion, an integrity, and, above all, a commitment to the
welfare of the people under his jurisdiction. It is under these conditions alone

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the: the customary chiefs will preserve and extend their influence, and it is our task to extend this influence. For, if the new institutions are meant for the progress and welfare of the Africans, then they must also be meant for that of the chieftainship.

Our intention, then, is not to leave the management of the country to the elected representatives alone, but to remain in close collaboration with them; for, if the elected representatives of yesterday have rights, the representatives of several centuries' standing retain theirs also.

Intent as I mean to be on curbing all the abuses for which the people have customarily blamed the chiefs, I will not cease to remind the Chief of the Territory, the members of the Government Council, and the elected representatives at all levels, that they themselves must remain, before God and man, the ones truly responsible for these abuses. For, while the lot of the civil servant has improved considerably, and that of the elected representative is at the summit of the pyramid, that of the chief has remained quite modest and quite comparable to that of the still miserable peasant—riches for the others, poverty for himself.

Your Excellency the Governor, Honorable Ministers, and Parliamentarians, I am sure that you understand me. I am equally sure that you think of the meager outlook for the territory, but it is necessary that everyone live well during the period of the seven fat cows, and meagerly during that of the seven lean cows. The cooperation of the chieftainship will be granted to you increasingly for the economic and social betterment of our territory. It devolves upon you, as agents of superior authority, to rid the chiefs of the arbitrary vexations to which no civil servant is subjected any longer, and to send them forth, not as mercenaries but as true captains, into the battle which we all have joined against the human misery that weighs so heavily upon our people.

We are all aware of the magnitude of the struggle, and the cooperation of the chiefs, who influence the entire Voltaic population, may be needed to crown it with success.

Moreover, your Excellency the Governor, the chieftainship has always served well—perhaps has served France, or at least its representatives, too well, at the expense of its own interests.

But I will deliberately forget the errors of the past. I shall remember only the true fidelity which my fathers and their associates have always displayed toward France. I shall look only for the gratitude of the Government of the French Republic on their behalf, and for the considerable role they played in transforming our country. I shall think only of that Franco-African friendship which under normal circumstances will lead us to success, happiness, and peace. I know that the times are difficult; I know that men today have numerous reasons for quarrels. I know that vast popular or so-called popular movements sometimes topple all that other men have built with much patience and wisdom. But despite all of these things, it is with words of concord and of peace that I wish to close, hoping that throughout our political battles we shall keep in mind the need for peace, because man is only happy insofar as he enjoys social peace, as well as peace of the heart.¹⁹

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